(b) to (d). Standards of service in both Air India and Indian Airlines are comparable to airlines in this region. However, constant efforts are made by both the airlines to improve punctuality of services and other passenger facilities both inflight and on-ground. Close monitoring of delays is made and immediate remedial steps are taken.

[*Translation*]

Travel Agencies Registered with 'International Air Transport Association'

3141. SHRI RAM SHARAN YADAV: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the number of travel agencies operating in the country at present;

(b) the number of agencies, out of them, registered with the International Air Transport Association;

(c) whether the Government propose to withdraw the recognition which are not registered with the International Air Transport Association; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) to (d). Government has a system of giving recognition to travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators on their satisfying certain norms with a view to ensuring efficient and reliable service to tourists. On the basis of these conditions the number of travel agencies approved as of date are 233. Registration with IATA is one of the conditions for approving of travel agents. However, Government is reviewing the terms and conditions for "recognition" so as to make it simpler and more effective.

[*English*]

Nickel in Chocolates

3142. SHRI VIJAY NAVAL PATIL: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some researchers have warned that chocolates contain nickel which can affect human health;

(b) if so, the permissible limit of nickel consumption; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to prevent harmful effects of nickel consumption through excess eating of chocolates by children?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI D.K. THARADEVI SIDDHARTHA): (a) to (c). Environmental Research Laboratory, Lucknow, which is a small private laboratory, has screened a few samples of chocolates and reported that they show higher nickel content in chocolates. However, the result of samples of chocolate analysed at the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, a permanent research centre under the Indican Council of Medical Research have been found to be in agreement with values reported from Denmark i.e. with a mean figure of 1.26 mg/kg. Latest report of HO has mentioned that there is lack of evidence of a carcinogenic rssk from oral exposure of nickel. In fact, nickel has been shown as an essential trace metal in some plants and bacterial enzymes. Based on this information, the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, has opined that there is no need to lay down any maximum limit of nickel in chocolate.